Besides, National Horticulture Board is providing soft loan assistance for creating market infrastructure facilities like cold storage, pre-cooling facilities, grading-packing centres, refrigerated transport etc. Further, it is proposed to modify the assistance from soft loan to capital subsidy at the rate of 25% for cold storage.

Insurance for Groundnut Crops

957. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to make it compulsory for farmers to take insurance on their groundnut corps;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government insists on liking loans to agriculture insurance on groundnut too; and

(c) is so, the details of cost of compulsory insurance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTUE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) The existing Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS) covers those farmers who avail of crop loans from rural financial institutions for growing wheat, paddy, millets (including maize), pulses, oilseeds (including groundnut) crops. As per the provisions of the scheme loance farmers in the notified areas and raising notified crops are compulsorily covered although participation by States in the scheme is optional. The rate of of insurance charges payable by the farmers are 2% of the sum insured for wheat, paddy and millets and 1% of the sum insured for pulses and oilseeds. 50% of the premium payable by the small and marginal farmers is subsidised by the Central and State Government on 50:50 basis.

Production of cotton

958. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Desh bhar mein kapas ke utpadan mein chintajanak girawat ayee" published in the Nav Bharat Times, dated 8th January, 1999;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(c) the measures taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) According to the news item, the production of cotton in the current year has declined steepily compared to the last year despite implementation of intensive Cotton Development Programme in 11 major cotton grawing States.

The report is, however, not factually correct as the production of cotton in the current year is estimated to be much higher at 140.1 lakh bales as compared to 111.4 lakh bales last year.

(c) In order to increase the production and productivity of cotton, a centrally sponsored scheme on Intensive Cotton Development Programme (ICDP) is being implemented in all major cotton growing States. The main strategies adopted under the scheme include the following:

(i) Transfer of technology to farmers through field demonstration, training, mass media etc.

(ii) Adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to minimize damages caused by diseases and pests.

(iii) Efforts to popularise newer varieties.

(iv) Enhancing area under irrigation through water saving devices etc.

The Government also announces the minimum support prices each year to provide remunerative prices to the farmers in the event of fall in the prices of cotton and arranges procurement through Cotton Corporation of India